

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 12956 181253Z

44

ACTION SS-25

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P 181208Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASH DC PRIORITY 6692

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ASMARA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY

USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 12956

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, ET, US

SUBJECT: KAGNEW FOUR

REF BEIRUT 12888

NBC'S JOHN PALMER HAS RETURNED TO BEIRUT FROM SUDAN AFTER FRUITLESS ATTEMPT VISIT KAGNEW FOUR, AND HAS FILED TO NBC A NEWS REPORT ON HIS TRIP. HE INFORMS POST HE HAD BEEN TOLD IN BEIRUT HE WOULD SEE ALL FOUR CAPTIVES, OBTAINED SUDANESE VISA IN CAIRO, AND TRAVELLED TO PORT SUDAN TO AWAIT CLEARANCE FOR JOURNEY INTO ERITREA. THIS WAS TO BE OBTAINED BY A COURIER WHO WAS TO TRAVEL FROM PORT SUDAN TO THE MILITARY COMMAND HOLDING THE CAPTIVES AND RETURN IN A TOTAL OF SIX DAYS. PALMER SAID THE COURIER DID NOT RETURN AT ALL AND AND AFTER 10 DAYS HE GAVE UP WAITING BECAUSE OF OTHER COMMITMENTS. PALMER SPECULATED COURIER MAY HAVE BEEN CAPTURED OR KILLED IN A BATTLE REPORTED BY ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES ABOUT THAT TIME. PALMER HAD IMPRESSION THAT THERE IS CONSIDERABLE CONFUSION AND POSSIBLY FRICTION NOT ONLY BETWEEN THE RESPECTIVE ADHERENTS OF THE TWO AMALGAMATED ERITREAN ORGANIZATIONS, BUT ALSO BETWEEN THE POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES OUTSIDE ERITREA AND THE
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MILITARY UNITS DOING THE FIGHTING. PALMER SAID HE DID

TALK TO ONE MAN WHO HAD SEEN TWO OF THE CAPTIVES, "ONE OF WHOM WAS A BLACK MAN," EIGHT DAYS EARLIER, WHICH WOULD MAKE IT AROUND OCT. 2. THE ERITREAN SAID HE WAS NOT AUTHORIZED TO DISCUSS THEIR CONDITION, BUT HE COULD CONFIRM THAT THE TWO WERE ALIVE ON THAT DATE. PALMER SAID THE PEOPLE HE WAS IN CONTACT WITH IN PORT SUDAN TOOK A FAIRLY MILITANT LINE ON ALL MATTERS AND TOLD HIM THE FOUR AMERICANS WOULD BE EXECUTED UNLESS THREE CONDITIONS WERE MET. THESE WERE DISMANTLEMENT OF THE U.S. FACILITY IN ERITREA, PAYMENT OF REPARATIONS FOR VILLAGES DESTROYED, AND RELEASE OF ALL ERITREAN PRISONERS IN ETHIOPIA. PALMER WAS ALSO INFORMED LETTERS FROM THE PRISONERS HAD BEEN MAILED TO THEIR FAMILIES "VIA BEIRUT A WEEK AND A HALF AGO." BELIEVE TEXT PALMER STORY WOULD BE AVAILABLE FROM NBC NEW YORK.
GODLEY

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